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### Transgender Rights are Your Rights

We all experience discomfort at times, but this feeling is daily for transgender and gender-nonconforming people. The dysphoria they feel about their gender expression causes distress and sometimes mental illness. With gender roles becoming more structured over the years, people have become more neurotic about their characteristics. Gender nonconforming people exist worldwide, and many of them are uncomfortable with opening up with the world because they are a small community with many stigmas against them. Some cisgender (i.e., people who identify with their original gender) people might even call transgender people freaks who do not deserve any help. Although some people might view transgender individuals as contradictory freaks, trans people deserve the same rights as cisgender people because they are also humans who also faced discrimination in the past. It would be immoral to deny certain rights for specific qualities.

Every human has a voice that has a meaning. The voices of those who have been oppressed by society for years need to be heard. Overdrawn stereotypes shall not silence our identities, even if they bring recognition to the transgender community. Despite having more visibility than ever before, people's lives in the trans community are on the line (Williams 1). This alertness partially comes from the various hate crimes that have been committed against

trans people in the past ten years alone, but it starts with the media. With more people aware of the issues that trans people have, there will come supporters and haters. If there is a voice against the community, trans people must speak louder. Transphobia does not form outside but from the mind, and this phenomenon is known as internal transphobia. The identity erasure that develops after absorbing negative messages about not following societal norms is common for trans people not in accepting circumstances. Internal transphobia can occur “with something as simple as not using the preferred name or pronouns of a trans person, and as complicated as attempts by family members to “correct” the behavior through abusive methods” (Blatt 1). These feelings tend to build up with years of discrimination, rejection, and other people’s ignorance.

Our choices, including how we express ourselves, affect how society works. Suppose we are all collectively scared of deviating from a defined norm, specifically what stereotypes we associate with our genitals. We decide to live depending on our thoughts and behavior, especially for trans people facing a transition between genders. Keeping a heteronormative standard throughout society will only prevent trans people from exploring their inner selves (i.e., whom they identify as)—the inability to feel comfortable travels across all aspects of life, including interpersonal relationships. If trans people do not have a support system, it is another chance for profound mental scarring.

We must acknowledge the strengths and diversity of the transgender community. Every member has something that makes them unique, and without them, our world would be a lot less bright. So many transgender activists and icons out there captivate millions every day. It would be hard to imagine the impacts of trans visibility if Caitlyn Jenner did not appear on the cover of *Vanity Fair* in 2015. But Jenner is not the only celebrity who has publicly transitioned. Others

include but are not limited to influencer Chaz Bono, actor Elliot Page, and activist Jazz Jennings. Even if cisgender people far outnumber trans people, they still influence our lives positively that the average person could not provide.

But imagine a world where transgender people and other members of the LGBTQ community do not have rights. Unfortunately, that is a reality for many LGBTQ people —within the United States and worldwide. One such example would be in Montana, where transgender lives are in danger due to the I-183 ballot measure drafted by anti-LGBTQ activists. This ballot disallows transgender people to use services related to their identified gender, including restrooms. If passed, transgender people would be in danger of physical assault and loss of employment, allowing any public place to kick out trans people for any reason. In the perspective of transwoman Kasandra Reddington, the measure only “assaults the freedom of trans people...making the public less safe for people to enjoy” (Medley 1). Similar actions have been taken in other states by anti-LGBTQ activists and conservatives. If these measures keep being considered, the public view will become even more tainted with transphobia. Allowing opposing opinions to the rights of others will only lead to more division and stereotypes.

Transgender people have faced discrimination in the past. Having them express their true identities will allow them to feel comfortable. But unfortunately, there is much stigma behind being transgender, mostly stemming from people who are cisgender. Although everybody has their struggles, transgender people are more likely to face discrimination based on gender identity (Lopez 1). They are more likely to be shunned by family, friends, and society alike. Opportunities such as employment and housing are also denied to transgender people. Negative

stereotypes stemming from the media also harm the perception of trans people, even if there is social progression.

Like everybody else, “trans people have a right to live in safety, to thrive, and to be treated with dignity” (ACLU 1). If an average person can receive help, why should somebody who does not fit the mold be rejected? What is the point of that? For some bigot to feel safe from their boogeyman? That’s not enough. Conservatives need to understand that other people’s struggles exist too. Trans people are not harmful. They are more likely to be victims than perpetrators due to transphobes’ hateful actions. And these actions could be something as small as misgendering and as significant as the federal government revoking trans individuals’ rights.

Although Joe Biden is currently the president and has been trying his best to cater to LGBTQ people, times under President Donald Trump were a struggle for trans people. Trump and his administration threatened to “adopt a definition of the term “sex” in federal civil rights statutes that would intentionally exclude transgender people from protection” (Pear 1). Across the four years that Trump was in office, his administration revoked various rights for trans people, including legally allowing discrimination and dismissing any complaints involving trans rights. But his impact stays with the anti-LGBTQ judges that he appointed. With transphobic people representing our country in the government and the courts, transgender people will continue to be in danger of discrimination and rejection. The struggle for fundamental human rights will not end until all remnants of transphobia disappear.

But to change the way that the average person sees transgender individuals will depend on the media they consume. People’s minds are malleable enough to change beliefs, especially ones that are particularly hateful. Social media’s rise has been a blessing to the visibility of the

transgender community, but it has also been a curse. Although free speech is a fundamental human right in the United States, there should be no place to put down others via words. Instead, the fight against transphobia must start peacefully and within our communities, one hand at a time. Spreading messages and allowing safe spaces for LGBTQ people will heighten the movement even further. Eventually, transgender rights will be acknowledged by everyone, even by those who harvest hateful feelings against the community.

Losing what is necessary hurts, especially if one is victimized. Being unable to support oneself or even using the restroom can be hurdles that some trans individuals experience daily. Even if a trans person has success, there will still be people judging regardless. The average person forgets that people who are different from them also have humanistic qualities. What the anti-LGBTQ activists are doing is only harming everyone else. They do not realize that there is no harm in being transgender. Cisgender people made it harder for trans individuals to live because some see differences in expression that seem evil in their eyes.

The transphobes have a hard time putting themselves into another person's shoes. They cannot imagine if they lost their right to express themselves freely. But up until the past couple of years, this was a reality for transgender people. Nowadays, "transgender people are already protected from discrimination in many contexts under federal law" (Esseks 1). Examples of discrimination protection laws include Title VII, Title IX, the Affordable Care Act, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Department of Health and Human Services, and Labor. These state and federal laws have to be fought for. By the end of President Obama's administration, transgender people had complete protection. Without these legislations, trans people will still be in danger from violent people.

Although some cisgender people argue that being transgender is contradictory to reality and should not be acknowledged, there are millions of people experiencing gender dysphoria every day. Many combine biological sex and gender identity into the same concept. Yet, they forget that genitals do not control how the brain thinks. It is understandable for most to have little insight and perspective into trans people's lives. Still, they are missing the ability to put themselves in others' shoes by dismissing transgender necessities. How trans people go through life, including how they think and feel, defines reality. The disconnect between one's assigned gender and their experiences can cause distress, especially for those experiencing social pressure (Main Line Health 1). Awareness of the dysphoria that trans people face will create empathy and understanding between cisgender and transgender people. Accepting people for their identities is the following step which will foster the atmosphere needed for equality.

It is our responsibility to protect trans people from experiencing discomfort and discrimination. With all groups and organizations trying to take away rights from innocent people, we cannot have trans individuals lose their right to live. Learning to tolerate differences within gender norms and stereotypes will allow people to feel more comfortable being their true selves. We cannot achieve equality for people without accepting minorities, including members of the LGBTQ community. If the world keeps discriminating against trans people, they will eventually find a reason against you. Respect and understanding start personally, with your responsibility to treat trans people with fairness and empathy.

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